

Northminster Presbyterian Church  
Weekly Devotional  
Week of December 14<sup>th</sup> – December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent

**Scripture Readings**

- Isaiah 61:1-11
- Psalm 126
- Luke 1:47-55
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
- John 1:6-28

**Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 (NRSV)**

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

**Devotional:**

There are many in our congregation and visitors who need the good news of deliverance that the prophet Isaiah offers. Some are battling a dashed dream – a relationship that has crumbled. They are broken-hearted. Others battling an addiction. Held captive in their own bodies.

The words of Isaiah offer healing and hope to them and to all of us who need it. The deliverance we need comes through Jesus, the Christ. Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1-2a as his mission statement in Luke 4:18-19, at the beginning of his ministry. Jesus brings good news to prisoners and to those who mourn. Are you broken-hearted? Jesus offers to bind up your wounds and bring comfort, healing, wholeness! Are you a captive of something that is eating away at your soul? Jesus offers you liberty, justice, release!

Jesus' ministry shows us that the deliverance he promises is for individual broken lives; it is also for God's people (the church) and for the whole world. When healing and liberty come, we will echo Isaiah's joy in verse 10. Our whole being will exult in God! The good news of God's deliverance is like flowers and jewels at a festive wedding. It is as inspiring and sure as plants that sprout from the barren earth every spring. God has already planted the seeds of our healing and hope.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Pastor Stacey